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Education, Democracy, & Social Change Conversation

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Discussion moderated by Thad Guldbrandsen

Open space discussion format - announce your topic and see if others are interested in discussing that with you. If not, move over to someone's table where the topic interests you. Then return to full group discussion with some sharing of group ideas, and larger picture items.

- Question emerged of how each individual fits into the clusters, when their program has been made a part of one already.
 - Thad's answer: Individuals can also follow personal interests, to some extent, to get involved in other ways. Recognizing PAT/OS don't all feel involved yet, and we do need to work to fix that.
 - Gail Mears: yes, this is more faculty/academically driven, but certainly involves staff throughout. That is still evolving...
- Introductions - many mention that this is both a personal and professional interest - it seems like most here will find this cluster to be their primary "home" but that can evolve, too.
- What kind of connections are there to your cluster - how do we envision the details of changing from one cluster to another? Or is it feasible to be in more than one? (my own questions)
- **Ideas being considered for discussion:**
 - *Mary Cornish*: concern brought to the State by a parent from PES that the scores on standardized tests were low - would like to see a coordinated STEM initiative to help work with PES on this type of thing
 - Literacy: what can we (PSU) do to eliminate illiteracy in NH overall?
 - How can we prepare our educators to be prepared to address the shortcomings of existing courses in early education? What are the best courses for the educators to take, so they are best prepared to teach the most critical skills to their future students? Need to work with schools, also current PSU faculty who are teaching these classes
 - Could work with elementary schools to find how to attract teachers/ match them with the right school / encourage PSU students to pursue this career
 - *Robin DeRosa*: how can we align this cluster with existing programs on open education, and vice versa
 - *Jess Dutille*: Happiness Quest, community connection / how do we connect underserved populations with the resources available, as it relates to this cluster.
 - How do we integrate undergrad/grad classes with real experience, and coordinate the curriculum appropriately for what is needed?
 - *John Kruekenberg*: "big history" - is an attempt to coordinate many academic subjects into an overarching topic, putting human history into scientific perspective. This could help integrate subjects that seem like they are unrelated, i.e. sciences - into topics like social change.
 - How are our students transitioned from student to professional? More community involvement / outside classroom work - is beneficial

- *Cynthia Vascak*: involvement of students at an early stage in these clusters is not just a goal, but it's critical and it will be happening.
 - *John K*: should social justice - a recurring theme - be a part of the cluster title? Or should it be a main theme, at the very least.
 - *Thad*: these **titles** need to speak to others, outside of this room and outside PSU. Need to speak to 17 y.o. prospective students and their parents, donors,
- **Recommendation**: there have been several mentions of the "social justice" phrasing, and its importance to this group. Many have mentioned it, and it has been requested to be specifically noted as a recommendation to include this in the language that talks about this cluster. **Maybe this would be in the synopsis? But not the title?* (my own thought)
 - *Cynthia V*: the people who end up being in this cluster will help define its direction and the specific content and initiatives.
- Thad: Sub groups - topics:
 - What is the idea being discussed?
 - How does it relate to existing initiatives?
 - Who to involve on and off campus
 - Involving students - how, specifically?
 - Resources needed?
 - time, money, curriculum, scheduling, transportation, partnerships
 - Other changes?
- Back to group discussion:
 - Resources needed: time is one of the hardest / most valuable - we may have what we need, and/or even if all needed "other" resources are available, TIME is needed most importantly
 - The Library as a resource - open access to this is central to the success of initiatives within this cluster
- STEM outreach at PES
 - Coordination is key - lots of people involved, hard not to become a burden. Need to streamline our involvement - maybe an actual coordinator position would be helpful
 - Background check - \$40 requirement - can we remove this barrier somehow?
 - Expertise across campus can be brought together, but how - we have experts but need to coordinate them, too.
 - Mary Cornish has a list of people who could be involved - will provide
- Employment after grad
 - experiences on campus and off, locally and internationally
 - workshops, internships, actual jobs, conferences, programs, presentations
 - How to associate these experiences with a class, specifically
 - design a class focused on the out-of-classroom experience entirely
 - Blow up the GenEd system - necessary to free up their time (students) to be able to enable these experiences

- Curriculum /educator prep/ integration
 - wide variety of subjects that educators need to know - how to cover these - and where does GenEd fit in with this
 - programs that exist currently - who in faculty is in educator prep - maybe there are some that aren't identified this way, but their role in this capacity is still important
 - five-year educator prep programs - undergrads take 4 years then masters? OR first of five years takes place in JR/SR year of HS that get the ball rolling
 - space in the curriculum, partnerships, 3/ 4/ credit system - all recurring ideas
 - GenEd is a limitation, as is external accreditation, on fitting in some of the topics we would like educators to be exposed to
- *Christian*: Perhaps we could have different GenEd requirements for BA vs BS degrees? Allowing for more flexibility where it's needed most?
- Community connection / underserved - Community conversation / happiness quest
 - valuable as an idea for a cluster, experience is important to students' overall development as individuals
 - could be some grant money available to fund initiatives in this area in particular
- Literacy in NH
 - what is the historical perspective?
 - what strategies are available, in practice elsewhere?
 - perhaps this is a monthly / other regular scheduled group meeting to bring multiple perspectives to the table for solving the problem,
 - students would come to the discussion with their experiences
 - Noted: one challenge is reaching those who need to be served - they may not wish to self-identify due to stigma
 - Goal: to develop a process and adapt it for use elsewhere - perhaps be able to sell the process as a marketable idea to others - this is a challenge for reaching the underserved population as well
- Global perspective:
 - many of these ideas are local in nature
 - Need to recognize the diversity that does exist here, even though many do not see it in this area.
 - Recognition that the world is changing and adapting quickly, students need to be prepared for this reality
 - There is no "soul" in this process right now - what is it?
 - More importantly than the survival of PSU, we need to create a system of preparing students for the world, and being productive, happy citizens of the world
- Student involvement
 - Difference between "creating a thing for the students" and "involving them in the evolution of their own educational experience"
 - More collaborative, less distinction between the roles of students and faculty/staff
 - "We are a collaboration of learners engaged in a changing world"
 - We are all teachers and learners

- Strong desire to be able to find out what others are doing with clusters, within this one or in others - some visible place to post ideas and perhaps respond to them?
- *John K*: this cluster seems very focused on the education piece, less on the social justice piece.

- Conclusion - Thad

- clearly, more discussion is necessary
- website will be a resource
- at this point, we have been more interested in the process of developing the cluster and its initiatives - but need to figure out how to implement the ideas.